

**May 10, 2006**

**SCHAKOWSKY CONDEMNS ATTEMPT TO GUT CAFE STANDARDS**

**Urges Energy and Commerce Committee to Raise Fuel Economy Standards, Lower Gas Price**

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today condemned Republicans' delay in raising fuel economy standards in a markup before the full Committee. The Committee passed a bill which would give the Bush Administration sole authority to raise or lower standards without the consent of Congress, and to move to a size-based fuel economy system which could lead the automobile industry to produce larger, less fuel-efficient vehicles.

Schakowsky's full statement is below:

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to participate in today's mark-up if Republicans and Democrats were coming together to raise CAFE standards and to fight our addiction to oil. A number of members on this Committee have consistently worked to raise this issue in every major energy debate, year after year. Now, after the Committee has held one hearing on CAFE standards in ten years, we are marking up a bill which does not raise standards, and gives the Bush Administration until the end of 2008 to issue a new regulation. When I asked the Committee to take immediate action to bring gasoline prices down at last week's hearing, two and half years was not what I had in mind.

The benefits of raising CAFE standards are clear. I am a co-sponsor of Congressmen Boehlert and Markey's bill which would raise CAFE standards for passenger cars to 33 miles per gallon by 2008, decreasing our daily oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels a day and eliminating our need for oil from the Persian Gulf. Our demand for oil has increased by 1 - 3 % each year, and global demand continues to rise. Without promoting efficiency and investing in alternative fuels, our oil dependence will set the U.S. on an unsustainable course that will damage our environment and endanger our security.

The proposed legislation could actually damage the effectiveness of CAFE standards and slow the urgent need to raise them. Rather than maintaining Congressional oversight over the Administration's CAFE regulations, this legislation gives the executive the sole authority to raise - or lower- CAFE standards and eliminates Congress' veto power. It gives the Bush Administration until the end of its term to issue a new regulation, and it does not even require that it raise CAFE standards when it reaches that date. CAFE standards must be raised today simply to affect our demand for gasoline several years from now.

Furthermore, opening the door to reformed, size-based CAFE standards could provide manufacturers with a perverse incentive to manufacture larger vehicles which have to adhere to less strict standards. This could lead foreign manufacturers to flood our small automobile market, further crippling the U.S. auto industry. Reformed CAFE standards are bad for the environment and the economy.

This Committee should have convened today to raise CAFE standards. Auto manufacturers are already exceeding the 27.5 mpg standard which was set for passenger cars twenty years ago. The process has not been sound or thorough, and the proposed policy reflects that. This continues the second week this Committee has responded to record gasoline prices by looking busy while doing nothing that will bring prices down to help consumers.